# Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk heads liturgy at Moscow representation of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch



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On 26th July 2022, on the feast of the Synaxis of the archangel Gabriel, celebrations took place at the metochion of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch to mark the patronal feast day. The Divine Liturgy in the Church of the Archangel Gabriel was celebrated by the chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony and the representative of the Patriarch of Antioch and All the East to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and dean of the metochion the metropolitan of Philippopolis Niphon.

Serving with the bishops were the representative of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia to the Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East archimandrite Philipp (Vasiltsev) and the clergy of the metochion.

Protodeacon Vladimir Nazarkin headed the diaconal part of the service. At the conclusion of the Liturgy a prayer service was offered to the archangel Gabriel in the open air in the courtyard of the church.

The prayer service was attended by representatives of the diplomatic missions of Mexico, Belgium, USA, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Montenegro, Argentina, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Romania, Luxemburg, Poland, Portugal, Brazil, Tunisia, Columbia, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Yemen, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Iraq, Albania, Palestine, France, Greece and Denmark.

Among those present was also the president of the International Foundation for the Spiritual Unity of Nations V.A. Alexeyev.

At the conclusion of the prayer service, the metropolitan of Philippopolis Niphon greeted the chairman of the DECR and said:

"It is a great joy for me today, Vladyka, to convey to all those present at this celebration the love, blessing, prayers and greetings of our Patriarch, the Most Blessed John, Patriarch of Great Antioch and All the East.

I would like to express our gratitude to you for coming with your companions to adorn today's service and to convey through you our great reverence for His Holiness Patriarch Kirill, the Primate of the Holy Church of Russia, for his constant archpastoral care and attention towards our representation church.

Dear Vladyka! The Lord, through the prayers of the holy archangel Gabriel, chose you to be an inheritor of great bishops with whom I am personally acquainted, and we believe that with God's help the good relations between the Holy Church of Russia and other Churches, both Orthodox, Christian and non-Orthodox, will continue to develop in the spirit of brotherly love."

As a souvenir of their concelebration metropolitan Niphon presented to metropolitan Anthony a gift of an episcopal encolpion.

Speaking to those present at the celebrations, the metropolitan of Volokolamsk Anthony conveyed to them the greetings and blessing of His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill. Addressing the metropolitan of Philippopolis Niphon, the chairman of the DECR said:

"Your Eminence, dear and esteemed metropolitan Niphon. First of all, on this festive day I would like to convey to you the deepest heartfelt greetings and good wishes on behalf of the Primate of our Church His Holiness the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill. His Holiness, knowing that today we will pray

together, asked me to convey to you his brotherly love and gratitude for the way, in serving in Moscow for many years as representative of the Holy Church of Antioch, you have brought our Churches closer together and for preaching the gospel of Christ, which you have done at various historical periods over the years.

Many years of friendship tie you to His Holiness the Patriarch. Literally quite recently I watched a video clip which showed archive footage of you, then still quite a young archimandrite, visiting the Leningrad Theological Academy, the rector of which was the future Patriarch Kirill and how you served with him. Watching this footage, I thought to myself: Father Niphon was already carrying out his service in Russia, and I was yet to be born!

Dear metropolitan Niphon, this great feat, which you have accomplished for many years now, is worthy of all respect. You know how people respect and love you in the Russian Church, you know how our Patriarch too and all the bishops, clergy and faithful, treat you with love and respect, seeing in you a good pastor who is an example of sincere and zealous service to Christ's Church.

In belonging to the younger generation of bishops of our Church, I would like to thank you fr om the depths of my heart for your service as, of course, we may read of many things in history books and fictional literature, but not even the most engaging story documented on paper can be compared to the opportunity of conversing with you personally, for by doing so the experience of one man who for many years has served Christ's Church with dignity is transferred to others. You are a model to be emulated for all of us, dear metropolitan. May God and we, your successors and inheritors, be so assiduous in serving Christ's Church and be of use in the cause to which the Lord has called us.

Dear Vladyka Niphon, it is especially joyful and pleasing on this day to celebrate services with you for the first time here at the metochion of the Church of Antioch. It is with great warmth that I recall how just over half a year ago I had the honour and joy to be in your homeland of Lebanon wh ere we prayed together in churches and visited remarkable locations, including your home town of Zahle. Of course, being alongside you then, I could not but see with what respect and reverence your compatriots surrounded you and how they treated you with sincere love. I would like to thank you for your support and brotherly love. Upon my appointment to the position of chairman of the Department of External Church Relations you were one of the first to congratulate me and assure me that you would do everything you could to support, encourage and help me with your wise advice. This is very precious to me, dear Vladyka.

I thank you for the opportunity to be with you here today. I would like to assure you of my prayers for Your Eminence and for the Holy Church of Antioch, which is a martyr and confessor Church undergoing a difficult time as a result of complex political processes in the Middle East. But we steadfastly affirm

that the Lord’s promise is sure, that the Church will exist eternally and the gates of hell shall not overcome her.

Vladyka, when you were here earlier at a difficult time for our Church, you know well that all hardships with time pass, while the word of Christ lives forever. I thank you for your hospitality and love.”

As a souvenir of their concelebration metropolitan Anthony presented metropolitan Niphon with a gift of an episcopal encolpion.

After the service at the metochion of the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch there was a celebratory reception attended by the representatives of the diplomatic missions accredited in Moscow.

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